

the Reporter

Illinois Hospital Association



October 29, 2007

LEGISLATURE RETURNS NOV. 1

The General Assembly has been on a break since ending its veto session on Oct. 12. Lawmakers will return to Springfield Nov. 1 to try to agree on funding for Chicago area mass transit.

Meanwhile, State Rep. Karen May (D-Highland Park) is seeking to revive **HB684**, a bill backed by AFSCME that would require hospitals to provide discounts to all uninsured patients, regardless of income, assets or residency. Hospitals would be barred from charging uninsured patients more than 110% of the Medicare rate. A subject matter hearing of the bill by the House Health Care Availability and Access Committee is scheduled for Nov. 7 in Chicago. IHA has been working actively all year to oppose this bill, which was re-referred to the Rules Committee last April.

U.S. REPS WEIGH IN ON IRS FORM

Illinois Congressmen Peter Roskam (R-6), Phil Hare (D-17) and John Shimkus (R-19) have signed the bipartisan Tubbs Jones/Porter letter urging the IRS to revise its proposed Form 990 hospital Schedule H to provide for reporting the full value of hospital community benefits, including Medicare underpayments and bad debt. Some members of Congress want to impose a one-size-fits-all rigid threshold of charity care or limited community benefits for hospitals to retain their current tax-exempt status. More congressional cosigners are needed to persuade the IRS to recognize our concerns and modify proposed changes. To send an e-mail from IHA's web site, [click here](#).

Given the ongoing discussion in Illinois on hospitals' tax exemption, IHA has made fighting the proposed IRS changes a priority issue. In addition to direct communication with the IRS,

IHA has encouraged the Illinois Congressional delegation to support the needed revisions. See the [IHA web site](#) for further information.

U.S. HOUSE PASSES REVISED SCHIP EXPANSION BILL

One week after an unsuccessful attempt to override President Bush's veto, the U.S. House passed a revised version of a \$35 billion expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) on Oct 25. The vote of 265-142 to approve **HR3963** is not veto proof, and the President has vowed to veto this latest measure. House Democrats made minor changes that would ease adults off the program sooner, set a firmer eligibility cap and ensure that illegal immigrants would not have access.

IHA SAFETY CONFAB DRAWS MANY

About 130 hospital leaders and health care professionals from 36 hospitals attended IHA's "Safety Connections" conference on Oct. 24, the capstone event of IHA's year-long Patient Safety Learning Collaborative. Seventeen participating hospitals shared key strategies and lessons learned from the nine-month initiative involving patients and family members in the design and delivery of safe, high-quality care.

In addition, patient advocate Dan Ford offered a passionate firsthand account of a husband's response to devastating medical errors experienced by his wife and his current work as a patient advocate. He saluted the critical work of IHA's unique statewide learning network in helping to make positive changes. One attendee, a risk manager, commented, "Mr. Ford's presentation has caused me to re-examine the way I deal with patients and their families." Overall, attendees once again overwhelmingly rated the program as excellent, positive and

motivating. For more information about the upcoming 2008 collaborative, contact Becky Steward at bsteward@ihastaff.org.

MRSA IN THE SPOTLIGHT

With the news media in Illinois and across the country focusing on methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) cases in schools, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recently issued guidance to reduce the risk of MRSA infection in schools. Guidelines include thorough hand washing and keeping cuts and abrasions clean and covered. The Centers for Disease Control also has information on its web site at www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools.

The news media in Illinois is also looking at the new state laws on MRSA screening and other interventions to prevent and control multi-drug resistant organisms and infection reporting requirements under two other laws, the Hospital Report Card Act and the Consumer Guide to Health Care. IHA supported these laws and continues to work closely with IDPH on their implementation. Information about all of these laws is on IHA's web site ([click here](#)).

MENTAL HEALTH BILL ADVANCES

A mental health parity bill is headed to the U.S. House floor after approval by the House Energy and Commerce Committee on Oct. 16. Several GOP amendments, all defeated, would have limited the conditions covered or allowed the government to remove certain conditions from the regulations. Both the House bill (**HR1424**) and the Senate measure (**S558**) would require health plans to offer mental health benefits that are equal to other conventional medical and surgical benefits, but the House bill requires insurers to cover more. With 273 cosponsors, the bill is expected to pass the House.

IHA PROGRAM ON NEW LAW

"Communicating Effectively with Deaf and Limited English Proficient Individuals - What Hospitals Need to Know" will be held Nov. 14 in Naperville and videocast to 3 other locations. The program will provide information on recent changes to the Language Assistance Services Act; the new licensure law for interpreters for the deaf; federal and Joint Commission requirements; and resources available. New requirements for hospitals and nursing homes became effective Oct. 11. For information, [click here](#). For program information contact Barb Haller at bhaller@ihastaff.org. To register, [click here](#). Early bird registration ends Oct. 31.

IHA OFFERS PAPERLESS OPTION

To improve the effectiveness of our communications with members, IHA is planning to "go electronic" in 2008. Increasing use of electronic communications will make our interaction with members faster, more timely and more cost-efficient. Next month we will send members a brief questionnaire offering them the option of receiving the Friday Mailing, including the *Reporter*, electronically instead of through mailed paper copies.

BRIEFLY NOTED...

✓ "Proactive Connections: Lessons Learned from Mt. Sinai's Experience with the California Nurses Association," a half-day program for IHA members, will be held Nov. 5 in Naperville and Nov. 7 in Springfield. [Click here for details](#).

✓ Henry J. Kutsch, IHA Board Chairman in 1970 and former President of Ravenswood Hospital Medical Center in Chicago, passed away on Oct. 14 at the age of 81.